

Working with existing resources to support parental engagement in careers

Background

Parents, carers and guardians play an important part in career and education choices of young people. The Gatsby Foundation is undertaking a programme of research and piloting in order to find out how to support schools and colleges, to help parents* have these discussions with their children. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Gatsby and the Careers and Enterprise Company have worked together with Careers Leaders to explore ideas and good practice in working with parents in these challenging times. This guidance is part of a **suite of resources** developed swiftly in autumn 2021, to share what practitioners say is working in schools and colleges right now.

**The word 'parent' is used to refer to parents, carers and guardians*

Overview

Whether lockdown has hindered or increased parental engagement, schools and colleges had to adapt and come up with new ideas to increase engagement and mobilisation with their parent community. Some approaches can be implemented using existing resources and making the most of what you already have in your school or college. These engagement tips have come from directly from Careers Leaders who have successfully used them in their schools and colleges.

Tips for quick ways to increase parental engagement in careers

Making the most of existing events



It is helpful to capitalise on existing school and college events (e.g. parents' evenings) to ensure careers is highlighted at key transition and decision points. Building careers activities into broader touchpoints, including pastoral events, can be more successful in engaging parents in careers: attendance might be higher and the information about careers can be shared on multiple occasions.

To make the most of wider events, Careers Leaders reported the benefits of having an institution wide approach to careers. This can be done by engaging the leadership team, pastoral team, informing subject staff and developing systems and policies to ensure a common and consistent approach across the school or college.

Making the most of technology



Schools/colleges have used technology as a resource during lockdown, to keep parents engaged and communicate efficiently.

- Successful practices include **virtual parent meetings**, designed to replicate face to face contact and centred on specific careers activities, such as work experience or progression choices, or focused on specific routes such as apprenticeships. These can be live streamed, and questions can be asked during the event or sent in advance. It can also be helpful to record segments which can be shared as a resource.

'With lockdown, we have been really good at doing virtual parent meetings - just for information or for specific events. For example, we are having a Welcome to KS4 evening with Y10 which gives key information out. Parents can email questions in prior to the event or ask via the chat facility. In addition, we ran our first parents' evening virtually which was a success. This was in the form of individual Google Hangouts.'

Judith Scott, Assistant Vice Principal and Careers Leader, The Rawlett School, Midlands

- **1 to 1 meetings** were also carried remotely during lockdown and appear to have been really useful for parents and young people. They allowed careers teams to offer personal guidance and facilitated parental support.

'I did carry out some video calls via Google Meet - these were prebooked, recorded and without camera with both parent & child present for safeguarding purposes - these were very useful.'

Leighton Collins, Careers Leader, Firth Park Academy, Yorks and Humber

Using parents as a resource



A good way to mobilise parents is to consider them as a resource. With employers being unable to host visits or run sessions in school/college, parents working in relevant industries/businesses could be invited to speak at virtual events and share their experience. This could then develop into parents being asked to support with work experience either virtually or in person in future.

'We also tap into their skillset as employees and employers and often ask parents to support with employer talks and work experience placement opportunities.'

Joshua Mangas, Assistant Principal: Engagement & Participation / Careers Leader, Co-op Academy Walkden, North West

Further resources

You can find other resources about engaging parents in careers guidance on the [CEC Resource Directory](#), such as the Conversation starter resource and the Communications tips.